

F/Sgt. Robert John Middleton R/91294 RCAF

Robert was born on 19 August 1917 in Dundee, Scotland, the son of Nicoll Middleton and Mary Middleton (née McGukin). The month before Robert was born, Robert's father died whilst serving with the 4th Battalion Black Watch during WW1. In 1921 his mother and the family emigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto, Ontario.

Educated at St Clare Separate School and De la Salle College, Oaklands, Ontario, Robert was employed as a clerk for the Sinnott News Company and then as a shipper for William Neilson Company when, in October 1940, he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RCAF.

Called up in January 1941, Robert was awarded his WOp/AG badge in December 1941 and was posted to the UK in January 1942. Following advanced training, in August 1942 James was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Yorkshire, from 29 OTU at RAF North Luffenham, Rutland.

On the night of 6/7 December 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on vital railway sidings near Mannheim, Germany. Of a combined force of 272 aircraft, 101 Squadron contributed five crews.

At 1739 hours on 6 December Robert, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor in Lancaster I ED322 (SR-T).

Returning from the mission in the early hours of 7 December 1942, Robert's aircraft was 300 miles off course from base over the Pembrokeshire Coast, Wales. Whilst attempting to land at RAF Carew Cheriton, 5 miles NW of Tenby, Pembrokeshire, the aircraft crashed into the sea in Camarthen Bay, off Tenby, killing all on board.

The raid was a dismal failure with the loss of 15 aircraft. The target area was completely covered in cloud and only 500 incendiary bombs and some leaflets were dropped. The only damage to the city was the destruction by fire of an old wooden building, whilst a local farmer lost 25 sheep, 4 lambs, some turnips and a hay barn. There were no casualties in Mannheim or the railway sidings but a total of 55 aircrew were killed, 3 were taken POW, and a further 10 injured.

Also Killed: P/O Howard Earl Dabbs DFC RCAF (Pilot); F/Sgt. Leonard Roy Anderson RCAF (Nav); F/Sgt. Stefan Franchuk RCAF (AG); F/Sgt. Robert Gordon Smith RCAF (AB); Sgt. James Hughes (FE); Sgt. William Thomas Warren (AG).

On 10 December Robert was washed ashore at Rhossili on the Gower Peninsular, Wales. He is buried in St Mary Churchyard, Carew, Pembrokeshire

Robert is commemorated on Wall Panel 73.

Photo Source: www.veterans.gc.ca

